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### **Support for *Next Generation Connecticut***

I arrived at UConn about two and a half years ago as an over-ambitious freshman who, like many freshman, wanted to be a doctor. From a project I had done in high school, I also had an interest in getting started in research; this was just something of a side interest at the time. Outside of my classes I would think about biological problems I had read about that needed to be solved and how, despite my limited knowledge, I might go about solving them. This kept going on inside me until I finally decided that I wanted medical research to be a larger part of my career than clinical medicine and that I would attend an M.D./Ph.D. program after graduation instead of just medical school. Upon making this decision, I looked into what UConn students before me with similar post-graduation plans had done and noticed that some had gone on to M.D./Ph.D. programs at Washington University in St. Louis, Cornell, and Penn – three of the best places in the country to learn science and medicine – and was also able to see all they had been able to do with science while at UConn. Upon seeing this, I became sure that I was in the right place to learn to research.

Since then, my experiences at UConn have continually reassured this belief. I was able to get the early start I wanted in research and began working in a lab in Storrs in my first semester. Most important in my development, however, have been my experiences in the lab of Dr. Pramod Srivastava in the Neag Cancer Center. Since I began working for him after my freshman year, he has been a great teacher, mentor, and friend to me, always taking time out of his busy schedule as director of the cancer center, often on weekends, to talk with me. Faculty members like Dr. Srivastava, who take the time to nurture their students' interests, are the main

reasons behind the success of so many UConn students in science. Hiring 200 new faculty like this will allow more students to have the quality in their experiences that I've had in mine, and give them better preparation for whatever they decide to do after graduation, whether it be innovation in the biotech industry, making discoveries in academia, or a vast array of other options – education, clinical medicine, academic medicine and medical research, which is what I plan to go into – anything, you can do anything you want to with science. Overall, the *Next Generation Connecticut* initiative, by bringing in new researchers and mentors for students, attracting the top high school science students, and putting them together in a specialized honors program will help them to discover that what they can do in science is limitless and will aid in giving them what they need to be successful in this wonderful field.